
EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH READING AMONG GRADE ONE LEARNERS IN TSHOLOTSHO RURAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of physical environment on teaching and Learning of English reading to grade one learners in rural schools.. A qualitative research method was employed to gather in-depth insights from teachers and parents, in Tsholotsho Rural District. The study reveals that the school physical environment, home physical environment, and lack of skilled human resources (in this case teachers) significantly impact the learners' ability to learn English reading. Inadequate infrastructure, shortage of classrooms, and lack of resources such as textbooks, computers and electricity characterize the school environment. The home environment lacks access to gadgets, like televisions, radios, cellphones and other resources that can support learning. Furthermore, some teachers lack teaching skills, classroom management, and adaptive teaching methods, which were found to be hindering effective learning of English reading. This study highlights the need for urgent attention to address these challenges and create a more level playing field for rural learners. The findings of this study have implications for policy makers, educators, and stakeholders to prioritize the provision of adequate infrastructure, resources, and skilled teachers to teach grade one learners in rural schools.

Keywords: Physical environment, English reading, rural schools, challenges, grade one learners, Teaching and learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The physical environment plays a crucial role in shaping the teaching and learning of grade one learners. It is particularly crucial in rural areas where resources are often scarce. Quality education is globally acknowledged as a fundamental pillar for developmental progress in society and plays a pivotal role in shaping and empowering the future of individuals and communities, (Lombo and Subban 2024). For grade one learners, a conducive physical environment is essential for developing foundational skills including English reading. However, rural schools in Tsholotsho District, often face numerous challenges in creating optimal learning environments due to limited resources, inadequate infrastructure and unskilled grade one teachers. English reading is a fundamental skill that forms the foundation of academic success. The physical environment can either support or hinder the teaching and learning of English reading. Research has highlighted the significance of the physical environment in shaping learners. Despite the importance of physical environment in teaching and learning there is a dearth of research on its impact on English reading instruction in rural Zimbabwean schools. This study seeks to address this knowledge gap by exploring the impact

of physical environment on the teaching and learning of English reading to grade one Learners among Tsholotsho Rural District. By exploring the impact of physical environment, this study aims to provide insights into how rural schools can optimize their learning environment to support the learning of English reading to rural grade one learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The physical environment of a school includes buildings, classroom furniture, equipment, instructional materials, libraries, playgrounds Ene-Obong et al., 2012 (Cited in Baafi, 2020). A study done in Nigeria by Lazarus (2020) reveals that students' learning is a product of several organised activities and how well students learn at school can be linked to many factors. The environment is compared to a hidden chain that connects all the activities of the school in many ways and its influence is felt by all members of the school (Lazarus, 2020). Mwoma (2018) articulated that, reading materials were found to play a critical role in children's reading ability, which is supported by findings from other studies. There is need therefore for County Government to collaborate with parents and other education stakeholders to provide reading materials for children to read both at home and in school. The reading materials may include text books, story books and other print and non-print materials. Parents' ability to read was positively associated with children's reading ability, (Mwoma, 2018). Classroom environment such as physical, emotional and aesthetic characteristics of the classroom tend to enhance students' attitude towards learning (Goodlard, 1984, cited in Baafi, 2020).

A study done by Asiyai (2011) highlighted that, an appropriate learning environment is essential to safety and active learning and development. She maintained that, such a situation is supportive and productive for functional training of head, heart and hand. All students deserve a safe, respectful, caring and positive learning environment. The learning environment should foster a sense of belonging, enhance the joy of learning, honour, diversity and promote respectful, responsible and caring relationships

A study done in rural public primary schools in Narok County, Kenya, focusing on the ability of children's reading ability by (Mwoma 2017). The study has shown that both boys and girls performed far below average in the reading subtasks for both English and Kiswahili. This could be a pointer that, these children were not well prepared in the pre-reading skills acquired in the early grades one and two. There is need for the quality assurance and standards officers to ensure that teachers' are well prepared for teaching children reading. In support of the above statement, Chikuni (2024) highlighted that; teachers should be encouraged to enroll in institutions of higher learning that offer short courses in the teaching of reading.

A study done in Ghana on School Physical Environment and Student Academic Performance by Baafi (2020) found out that, most school environments in Ghana are not conducive to learning; students are overcrowded in classes; there are inadequate water and sanitation facilities. Ukeje, Akabogu, & Ndu, 1992 (Cited in Baafi, 2020) points out that, the classroom context, school and surrounding also influence students' achievement. The nature of the classroom environment has a powerful influence on how well students achieve a wide range of educational outcomes. Classroom environment such as physical, emotional and aesthetic characteristics of the classroom tend to enhance students' attitude towards learning (Goodlard, 1984, cited in Baafi, 2020). Educational structures significantly affect students' learning abilities, aspirations and motivation (Fisher and Dovey, 2016).

The results of a study by Turel and Gur, (2019) show spatial organization and physical characteristics of primary school buildings with a structure that allows for change and transformation, and contributes to the physical and cognitive development of children. It is

thought that the spatial experience of the child is important, as the educational buildings are the foremost places where this process develops.

Earthman and Lemasters (cited in Türel & Gür, 2019) investigated the relationship between a school's physical environment and children's behavior, development and success and found a link between these variables. The flexibility and adaptability of school design symbolizes a school's way of thinking in the field of education, its relevance for psychological and pedagogical imperatives, its care and self-sacrifice for raising consciousness, and the questioning of generations. There are also various parameters that affect the users of the school building as a platform for learning, entertainment, social and cultural sharing for both the children and the locals who are not used for education (Türel and Gur, 2019).

A study done in South Africa by Cilliers, Carole and Bloch (2018) discover that, literacy in rural schools is impeded, by the lack of reading material. Only 7% of schools in South Africa have a functional library while most classrooms do not have books available that learners can read. More than half of learners do not have access to books at home. There is also an acute shortage of relevant content and appropriate level of books in the African languages.

Nel et al. (2016) report that there are 30 libraries per million people in South Africa with only 46% of the population able to borrow books from the library. Typical challenges of a rural school include a high number of multi-grade classrooms, lack of public transport because of the isolated setting of the school, attendance problems of learners and diverse learner backgrounds (Mohangi et al. 2016). Cilliers, Carole and Bloch (2018) point out that, through a process of thematic content analysis, the following themes emerged: pedagogical challenges, infrastructure and provisioning for literacy and community engagement. These findings illustrate how the foundation teachers use the reading programme to enhance the literacy curriculum in schools situated in rural settings.

A study done in South Africa by Naude and Meier (2019) the study found out noise, as a result of the large number of learners in the class, as well as noise from the outdoor environment, contributing to the overload of learners' working memory, which ultimately impacts negatively on learning. The study also found that the large classroom sizes in Grade 1 prevented teachers from rendering effective support, which causes uncertainty among learners concerning what is expected of them when working on classroom tasks. This uncertainty leads to extraneous cognitive load.

A study by Marima, Kangethe and Runo (2016) points out that, lack of resources is the greatest challenge faced by early learning teachers in the teaching of reading. This shows that resources are one of the factors that influence the teaching of reading in rural schools. The effects of such external factors should be reduced by ensuring that all schools have similar resources and provide equal opportunities. Teaching materials are very important in the whole process of teaching and learning (Hossain, 2016). A study by Prince Dacosta, Zottor and Egyir (2022) highlighted that, a school's infrastructure reflects its curriculum and co-curricular activities. A study by Amoah (2018) highlighted that, in most rural schools, the facilities were not adequate, not in a good state and as such need some of renovation which might not have been done in a long time. It was also found that the availability and adequacy of school infrastructure affect the teaching and learning process.

A study on Improving the quality of early childhood education in Africa by (Adedeji & Olaniyan, (2011) point out that, resources make learning more pleasant to the students because they offer a reality of experiences, which stimulates self-activity and imagination on the part of the students. Teachers who taught under harsh working conditions, and without sustained attempt to improve their working conditions, failed to teach effectively, thereby making teaching a challenging task in rural schools. The difference in socio-economic status between

urban and rural areas affects the standard of teaching significantly. There is a wide gap between the socio-economic status of urban and rural environments, (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011).

In a study done on instructional constraints in teaching of reading in early childhood classes in Nairobi County in Kenya by Marima, Kangethe and Runo (2016) highlighted that, reading in early years of schooling should among other things, aim at reading for pleasure. Through learners' exposure to a variety of reading materials, help learners develop a word band of vocabulary and expose them to new ideas and sentence structures that are used later to communicate both verbally and in the written form. In keeping with the Piagetian perspective that children are natural explorers who construct knowledge and meaning from hands-on learning experiences. Language and literacy materials should be available in multiple areas of the room. This allows children to encounter literacy in all domains of their play, (Marima, Kangethe and Runo, 2016). All rural schools in the country should be provided with electricity and Internet facilities as well as teaching resources, (Gasva, Mutanana and Goronga, 2019).

A study by Neumann, Hood, Ford & Neumann (2012) revealed that, interactions with environmental print in the child's sociocultural context can develop their logographic reading skills. These skills, in turn, promote the development of emergent literacy skills that are the precursors to conventional reading skills. Environmental print may also be used more directly when parents and childhood educators use it to scaffold the learning of emergent literacy skills. A study by Najumba (2013) revealed that, schools which are well equipped with relevant educational facilities which comprise of instructional materials such as textbooks, libraries and even laboratories do much better in standardised examination such as grade seven than those which do not have resources. Mohammed and Amponsah highlighted that pupils may have low reading ability due to school heads not availing the necessary books for practice reading. Schools in rural areas are remote and underdeveloped while the community often display poor socio-economic circumstances and lack basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity and information and communication technologies (Mohangi et al. 2016). The poverty in rural areas will directly affect educational resources, experiences and opportunity, as it is difficult to attract experienced staff to these schools (Lester 2012). Typical challenges of a rural school include a high number of multi-grade classrooms, lack of public transport because of the isolated setting of the school, attendance problems of learners and diverse learner backgrounds, (Mohangi et al. 2016)

A study done in Namibia by Shikalepo (2020) points out that, the ministry of education, through their relevant directorates and departments, should ensure improved working conditions of rural schoolteachers, by provisioning enough facilities, instructional resources and justifiable work overload. Curriculum planners should broaden the curriculum outcomes to entail adequate professional training and preparation of student teachers during their initial teacher training programme, during which student teachers are informed of all content and contextual rural-based issues teachers will be facing at rural schools.

A study by Shumba and Gada (2018) suggest that schools should make resources available to buy supplementary reading materials for use by learners, and that teachers encourage learners to borrow books from libraries to practice reading independently. Teachers should study English through initiatives like English Language Proficiency Programmes.

A study by, Turel and Gur, (2019) the results revealed that, spatial organization and physical characteristics of primary school buildings with a structure that allows for change and transformation, and contributes to the physical and cognitive development of children. Gundogmus (2018) posits that, in order to improve the quality in the process of reading and writing instruction and ensure that teachers work peacefully, happily and eagerly. It is extremely important to identify the difficulties they experience in the process of primary

reading and writing instruction, and find out their solution offers for overcoming these difficulties.

A study by, Chakacha, Iwu and Dakoro (2014) revealed that, a well-equipped school is more functional and presents better learning opportunities for learners. The study recommended, among other things, that school planners, funders and policy makers should take note of the positive impact that a functional, clean and attractive school building can make on education. A study by Mncube, (2023) demonstrates that governments do not pay attention to basic infrastructure and amenities to promote effective education and quality of life. Infrastructure such as pit toilets in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are concerning. Again, the shortage and delays in the distribution of teaching materials and books.

Lombo and Subban, (2024) state that, the Eastern Cape Province is characterised by vast rural areas where the rural school physical infrastructure (RSPI) is a persistent concern to quality education. They went on to say that, the area is characterised by gross underperformance of schools, which manifests itself through consistently low Grade 12 results. On the other hand, a study by Chikuni, (2024) encourages educators to create a supportive classroom atmosphere that encourages help-seeking behaviors. The physical environment not only serves functional needs for educational activities but also has a significant relation with children's development and well-being, (Itoh 2001). This is an indication that, the inability of learners in rural areas to read is often attributed to the scarcity of essential resources, including qualified human resources, which are trained for teaching English reading to grade one learners.

In a study done in South Africa on Exploring educators' perceptions of the impact of poor infrastructure on learning and teaching in rural South African schools by Khumalo and Mji (2014) revealed that, the educators painted a bleak picture in respect of poor infrastructure provisioning and the proper functioning of their schools. It is argued that there is an urgent need to address the participants' concerns. Furthermore, the government should provide proper and adequate school infrastructure wherein classrooms, laboratories and libraries are equipped to lead to favourable learning experiences

According to the literature reviewed so far, other scholars believe that, physical environment does not matter. What matters most for children to read, is the teachers pedagogical skills. Najumba (2003) states that, learners still fail regardless of having enough resources, if teachers lack didactical and pedagogical skills and if these resources are underutilized. A study by Yangambi (2023) suggest that continuous improvement of school infrastructure should be considered and recommended for all schools to optimize student achievement and teacher delivery.

There is need for a spirit and philosophy of realism and optimism for all stakeholders interested in early childhood education development in the African continent so as to equip this sector with quality education based on informed dialogue on education reform strategies, (Adedeji, Fabunmi, and Olaniyan, 2011).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research paradigm, Approach and Design

The study was guided by the interpretivist philosophical paradigm in generating data from the selected sample. According to Creswell (2013), the interpretivist approach to research accepts that reality is relative and has multiple facets all depending on the context of the individual attaching meaning to that truth. Interpretivism as a research philosophy defines the approaches that are used to embrace the way people involved in a phenomenon under research give meaning to the data that they provide during data collection and interpretation processes (Westhuizen and Gerhardus, 2022).

In this study the qualitative research approach was adopted to address the objectives of the study. The qualitative research approach attempts to discover truth by exploring how and why participants interact with each other (Nieuwenhuis 2013). The use of a qualitative approach to describe a given phenomenon will provide an in-depth representation of the relevant inputs from all the relevant grade 1 teachers regarding their practices in teaching reading and the impact of physical environment. In addition, using a qualitative approach for this study allowed for a thick description of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2016).

The researcher employed a case study research design. A case study focuses on a single phenomenon in depth by interviewing a limited sample of participants and closely examining a bounded system (McMillan & Schumacher 2006). The case study investigates a particular event in its context and the researcher defines the case and its boundaries (Punch & Oancea 2014). The case in this study is the impact of physical environment in the teaching of reading to grade one learners. It seeks to understand the meaning attached to physical factors in the teaching of reading in rural schools from the Zimbabwean teachers' point of view.

Population

Population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristic (Creswell 2012). Shukla (2020) defines population as a set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied. In this research the population comprises of all primary school teachers, all parents, all learners and all primary schools in Tsholotsho district.

Sampling Technique

In finding participants for this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select teachers. Purposive sampling provided the investigator a chance to have a wider understanding on the impact of physical environment on teaching of English reading to rural grade one learners. Purposive sampling allowed the investigator to deliberately select participants or cases that would provide rich and detailed insights into the impact of the physical environment on teaching English reading to rural grade one learners.

By choosing participants who have experienced the specific context being studied, the investigator was able to gather more in-depth and nuanced data, which contributed to a wider understanding of the research topic. In particular, purposive sampling enabled the investigator to: Select rural grade one learners who have been taught English reading in a specific physical environment. Gather detailed information about their experiences and perceptions. Identify patterns and themes that might not have emerged through random sampling. Developed a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the physical environment on teaching English reading. As noted by Gall, et al. (2007), (cited in Dixon and Johnson 2011) say that, purposive sampling can also increase variance and thus improve the validity of the findings. Six grade 1 teachers from two schools were interviewed. This helped the investigator in understanding the phenomenon in different contexts. In this study, sampling was done at two levels. First, schools sampled were rural schools. Second, these teachers were teaching grade 1 learners. Therefore, 6 teachers were purposively selected for observation and interviews and six parents were conveniently selected for interviews.

Data collection instruments

The researcher used: semi-structured interview, observation and document analysis. This study employed multiple methods to data collection (Yin, 2016). This has an advantage of the methods complementing one another thereby strengthening the findings. The semi-structured interview gives a chance to the researcher to probe for more information as the interview

unfolds thereby supplementing on what the investigator may have omitted in the planned questions. Gall et al., 2007 (cited in Chuunga 2013) highlighted that, oral interviews usually allow respondents to speak in their own words thereby making the phenomenon clear. Berger, 2011 cited in Chuunga 2013) point out that, respondents were able to express their ideas/views and attitudes to the benefit of the researcher. They also allowed the researcher to record the conversation for analysis later. It is due to these advantages that the investigator used the interview method.

Data analysis procedures

The data was reflectively analysed starting from the time it was collected whilst still in the field just like what researchers say that data analysis in qualitative research is in parallel with data collection (Creswell, 2016). This enabled the researcher to discover important sources and information that had been over looked in the design. This was achieved in three ways:

- Having consultative meetings with respondents and supervisors.
- Having field note summaries
- Having data summary sheets as recommended by Drew, Hardman & Hosp, (2007). The recorded interviews were transcribed, while the memos, observational & teaching documents and records were read and analysed. Field notes were analysed and interpreted in readiness for coding in relation to the answers of the structured questions.

Theme 1: School physical Environment's Effect on English Reading

Teacher 3 reflected that, *infrastructure affects a lot. As you can see, there are no adequate tables and chairs. The handwriting is affected by lack of adequate furniture.* Parent 4 commented that, *children have shortage of furniture. They do not sit properly when they are in class. There is shortage of classrooms and sometimes they learn outside the classroom. Outside they will not have the charts to read. This will affect the effective learning of English reading to grade one learners.*

Parent 2 reflected that, *buildings are not enough and are needed because children sometimes learn outside the classrooms, under trees because of classroom shortages. Just imagine some snakes live in trees of which it is not safe for our children to learn under trees because any time a snake can bite children. Learning outside the classrooms under trees is risk to our children.*

Teacher 6 conveyed that, *lack of resources affects so much. In rural areas. we do not have electricity especially at this school and the homes surrounding us. We do not have computers to facilitate learning of English reading. Computers are very crucial in the learning and teaching of English reading. We do not have enough classrooms and we have hot sitting. We share the classrooms and sometimes early in the morning we will be sitting outside. Children cannot even listen properly because they will be paying attention to other things surrounding them. They do not have enough chairs and tables.*

Parent 6 stated that, *in some cases they learn outside the classroom because of classroom shortages. Sometimes, wind blows their books whilst reading and this affect their reading. Sometimes when they are in the classroom, the space is very small and they will be pushing each other instead of reading.*

One of the parent in parents' focus group disclosed that, *the location of the school affects the learning of reading. The school is far away, learners do not enjoy learning because when it is school time they think of the distance. On the other hand, weather affects, if the school is very far. These days it is very cold, sometimes we end up asking children not to go to school because*

of the weather and distance. In winter it is better they make grade one learners start at 10am but because of distance, it will not do again because children will end Up getting home at night. Teacher 4 points out that, the ministry of education provides the same syllabus for rural learners and urban learners. Whilst most of urban learners go to nearby schools compared to rural learners. Grade one learners in town have enough resources whilst rural learners do not have enough resources. Rural learners are taught by newly trained teachers from college, whilst urban learners are taught by experienced teachers. The grade seven examination's one-size fits all approach, gives unequal playing field as the same test fails to consider the unique challenges and limitations the learners face. It places the rural learners at a distinct disadvantage compared to their more privileged counterparts. At grade seven level, the examination is the same for those with advantages and those with disadvantages. It is not fair for the rural learners.

Theme 2: Home environment Influences on Grade One English Reading

Parent 4 had this to say, we have nothing to assist with reading at home. No televisions, no computers no cell phones. This is also affecting the learning of English reading to learners in rural schools. Parent 1, had this to say, here in rural areas, it is not the same with town life where by children are exposed to variety of gadgets. They do not know some of the things like a robot and many more. In town, they have televisions whereby children know many things because of television. Here we do not have even text books.

One of the parents articulated that, children in rural areas do not have gadgets like children in towns who have televisions and laptops. Some parents do not have even a phone to help their grandchildren. Learners In town they learn about things at school then later own they see those things on television. That is what makes learning in town different from rural education.

Parent 3 disclosed that, it is very rare to assist children with homework because in most cases children travel long distances. They get to school tired and end up sleeping in class. After school, they walk long distances back home and they get home late and tired. Instead of doing homework, they eat and sleep, no time for home work and we do not have lights at night for homework. Children in town usually walk short distances and some are driven to school.

Theme 3: The Consequences of Inadequate Teacher Expertise on English Reading Instruction.

The classroom observation and participants' responses reveal a lack of teaching skills among some teachers. This was evident in their ineffective classroom management and inability to adapt teaching methods to meet the individual differences of grade one learners. Some teachers had limited use of engaging and interactive teaching strategies.

Teacher 4 emphasized that, as long the teachers do not have teaching skills learners cannot learn reading. Without teaching pedagogies there is no way grade one learners can read. They may possess writing skills but may lack reading fluency. Reading is a fundamental skill to grade one learners that enables learning. Without reading skills, it becomes a challenge to acquire new knowledge. Teacher 2 pointed out that, most of the teachers are not trained to teach grade one learners. They are generally trained. A grade one teacher needs to be qualified to teach grade one. A grade one level is a delicate class, which needs a well trained teacher.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's findings reveal three primary themes impacting the teaching of English reading to grade one learners in rural schools: the physical school environment, the home environment, and the lack of skilled human resources, (in this case teachers). Participants consistently

highlighted the inadequacies of rural school infrastructure, including shortages of classrooms, furniture, and resources such as computers and electricity. These limitations force learners to learn outside, exposing them to safety risks and distractions. The physical environment hinders effective learning of reading, affecting handwriting, focus, and overall academic performance. Existing research highlights the significance of resources in early learning. Building on Marima, Kangethe, and Runo's (2016) findings on resource scarcity, Cilliers, Carole, and Bloch (2018) shed light on the specific challenges faced by rural schools due to inadequate reading materials. Najumba's (2013) study provides further evidence, illustrating the positive correlation between resource availability and academic achievement. This is an indication that resources are one of the factors that influence the teaching of reading in rural schools.

The home environment in rural areas lacks resources and exposure to technology, hindering learners' ability to practice English reading outside the classroom. Parents' inability to assist with homework due to fatigue, distance, and lack of resources further exacerbates the challenge. Research emphasizes the significant role of parents in a child's educational development. In line with existing literature Cole, (2011) notes that, parents are a child's first educator. Furthermore, a child's family and home environment has a strong impact on his language and literacy development and educational achievement. This impact is stronger during the child's early years but continues throughout their school years.

Research underscores the significance of teacher training in early education. Similarly, Chikuni (2024) advocates for teachers to pursue short courses in reading instruction, echoing this study's findings on the benefits of specialized training for grade one educators. The study highlights the need for improved teacher training programs. Therefore, the study suggest that school administrators prioritize professional development opportunities for teachers this would enhance instructional effectiveness and learner outcomes in English reading.

This study underscores the complex interplay between physical, home, and human resource factors influencing English reading instruction in rural schools. The findings suggest that: Rural schools require infrastructure development and resource allocation to create conducive learning environments. Parents and caregivers need support to provide a nurturing home environment that complements classroom learning. Teacher training programs, should prioritize specialized skills for grade one reading instruction, emphasizing classroom management and adaptive teaching strategies. Policymakers must address the systemic inequalities perpetuated by inadequate infrastructure and resource allocation. Briefly, the findings of this study align with existing literature on complex interplay of factors affecting English reading. There is need for a collaborative effort from policymakers, educators, and communities. By prioritizing infrastructure development, teacher training, and community support, we can create a more equitable learning environment for grade one learners in rural areas.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: The study revealed that grade one learners in rural schools face significant challenges in learning English reading due to inadequate school infrastructure, limited resources, and lack of skilled teachers to teach grade one learners. Additionally, the home environment and geographical location pose further obstacles to learning. The findings suggest that urgent attention is needed to address these challenges and create a more equitable learning environment for rural learners. The study's recommendations, include providing adequate infrastructure and resources, training skilled teachers, and implementing adaptive teaching methods. The study aim to improve the English reading skills of grade one learners in rural schools. By implementing these recommendations,

we can help bridge the educational gap between rural and urban learners and ensure that all learners have access to quality education.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- There is need for government to provide adequate infrastructure and resources to rural schools.
- School administrators should invest in professional development programs focusing on adaptive teaching strategies and classroom management. There is also need to deploy teachers trained to teach grade one learners to rural schools.
- There is need to address geographical and societal challenges affecting learning. Educators and policy makers should collaborate to improve school infrastructure, ensuring conducive learning environments.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

The study's findings are specific to the rural school district and may not be generalizable to other contexts. The study's sample size was limited, and a larger sample may have provided more robust results. The study relied on self-reported data from teachers and parents, which may be subject to bias. The study could explore the effectiveness of targeted interventions for rural learners with reading difficulties. Another study can be conducted on a comparative study of urban and rural learners' English reading skills and instructional strategies.

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